



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 30 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
30 MAY 1968

1. France

The government is near paralysis as the country slips further toward anarchy. Clearly, the situation is reaching the point where some sort of catharsis is required. If De Gaulle recognizes this, it would not be out of character for him to resign, sacrificing himself "for the good of France," rather than permitting catharsis to take a more violent and destructive form.

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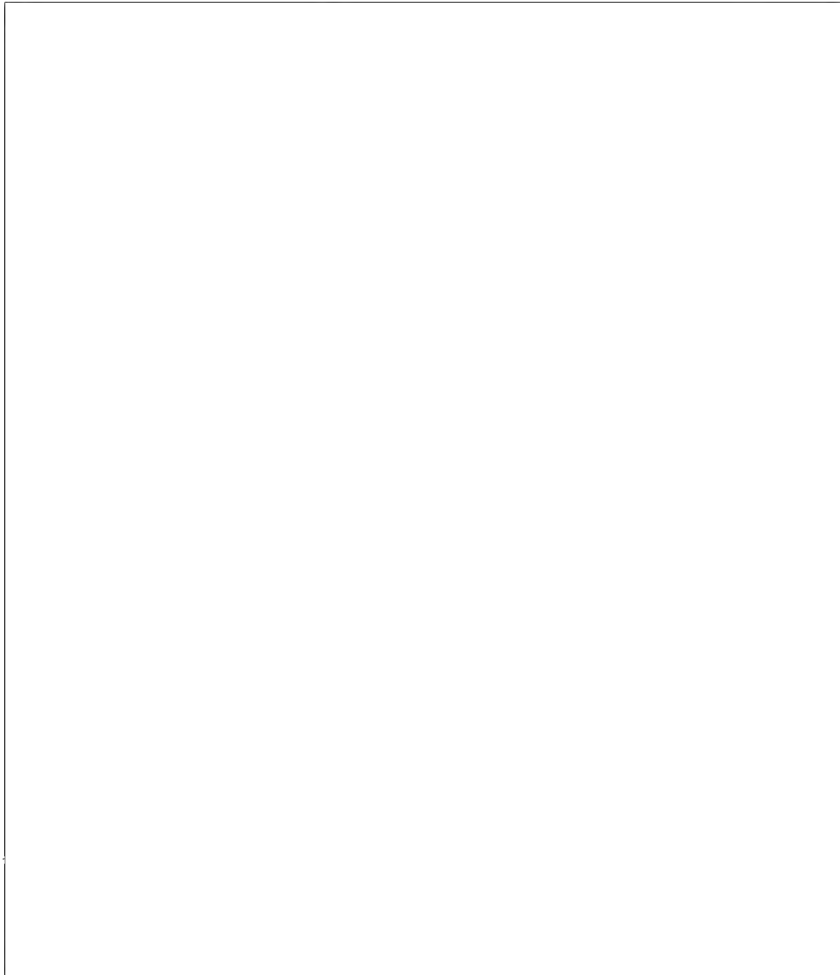
De Gaulle apparently interrupted his trip to his country estate yesterday for a hurried conference with General Massu and other army commanders. This was presumably to ensure that he had their support for the steps he intends to take upon his return to Paris later today.

Outside the regime, the political fortunes of ex-Premier Mendes-France appear to be on the upswing. A hero to the "antiestablishment" leftists, he has growing support among workers and students. Certain middle-of-the-road politicians are now also pushing him as the "man of the hour," capable of restoring order while keeping the Communists out of power.

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2. Jordan

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3. Iran

The Shah continues to resist Soviet offers to sell him great quantities of military equipment. The Soviets will not be discouraged easily, however. The large credits which Iran will earn from its exports of natural gas to the Soviet Union can most conveniently be offset, in the Soviet view, by military deliveries.

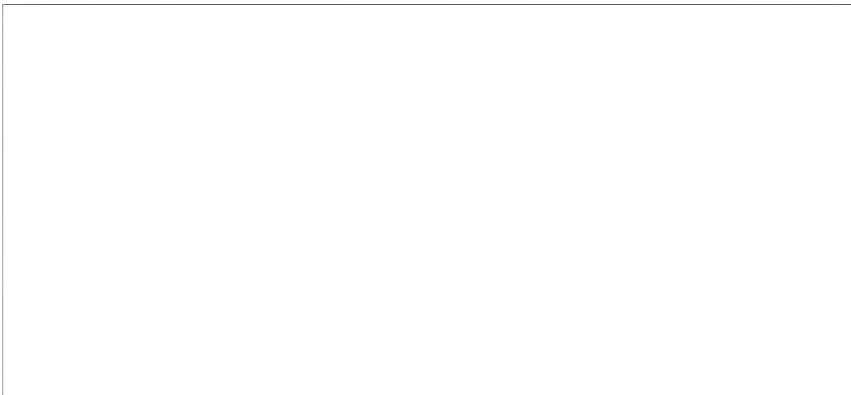
4. Brazil

A new and potentially significant reform movement is emerging under the leadership of Archbishop Dom Helder of Recife. He already has a substantial following, especially among the poor and the clergy in the impoverished north-east.

Dom Helder now hopes to launch a nonviolent protest campaign against the inequities of the traditional social system. He may have obtained at least general approval for his effort from the Pope during his visit to Rome last month.

The Archbishop said he would avoid criticism of the authorities, but his most recent speech openly encouraged student opposition to the government. Conservative Brazilians, of course, regard him as a threat, and many military men call him a leftist radical. In fact, however, he has refused on at least one recent occasion to support extremist-led agitators.

5. East Europe



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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30 May 1968

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

30 May 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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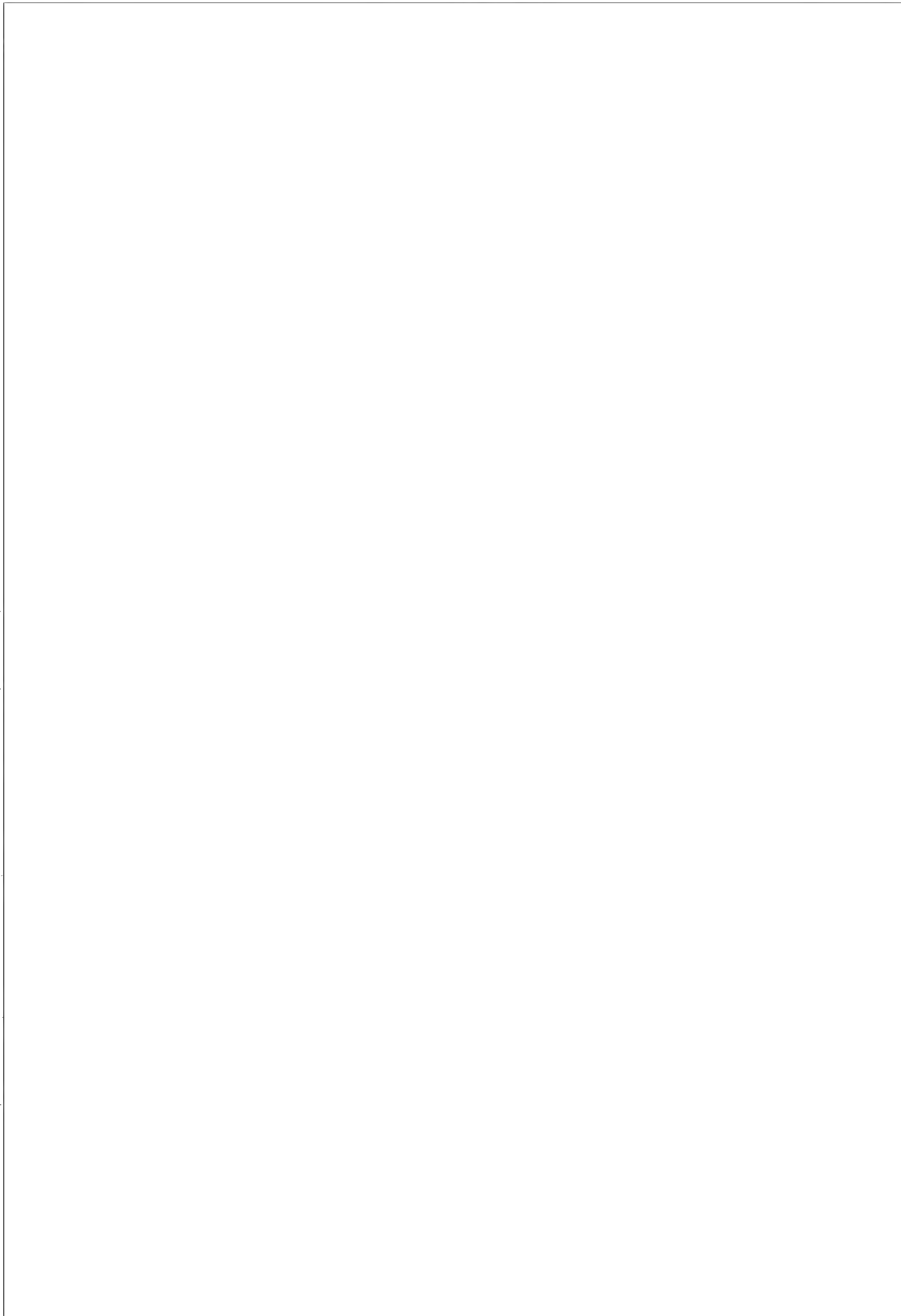
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Bridge Repairs: The Communists are making permanent repairs to bridges on rail lines in northern North Vietnam. Photography of 16 and 22 May showed steel bridge trusses stored in the vicinity of the destroyed Paul Doumer Bridge. A large floating crane near the bridge--capable of lifting the trusses into place--has been used to remove part of a sunken span and, in addition, damaged bridge piers are being repaired.

Earlier repairs to the Doumer bridge were makeshift and consisted of decking laid on rebuilt and improvised piers. The use of steel trusses, similar to the type in the original bridge, indicates that the Communists are seeking to restore the bridge to its original condition. There are 16 bypasses to the Doumer bridge in operation.

The same photography also showed trusses being used for bridge repairs on the Hanoi - Thai Nguyen rail line.

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Another Traveling Diplomat: The North Vietnamese ambassador to Moscow has become the latest Hanoi official to travel to a neutral country to lobby for the North's position on the bombing issue. According to a report from the US Embassy in Helsinki, the ambassador arrived there on 28 May for what was described as a "friendship visit" in order to inform the Finnish Government of North Vietnam's views on the war. In questioning by the press upon his arrival, the ambassador sidestepped questions on Hanoi's attitude toward the Paris talks by claiming that his government was always "optimistic." He also dodged questions as to whether North Vietnamese troops were engaged in the fighting in South Vietnam.

The ambassador is scheduled to have talks with several Finnish Government officials and to meet with the Finnish Red Cross. It is not clear whether he will travel to other countries, although if past visits of this sort are any indication, he will make several other stops before returning to his post.

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Foreign Shipping During April: Ship congestion at Haiphong eased considerably in April as the restriction of US bombing allowed a quickening of unloading operations. The average layover time for dry cargo ships departing the port fell from 28 days in March to 19 days in April and some further improvement is expected in May. The movement of cargo inland from the port apparently did not accelerate, however, and the volume of cargo in open storage increased.

Ship arrivals and imports continued at a high level, although they were down slightly from March. Forty foreign ships arrived with 152,400 tons of cargo, compared with 43 ships and 169,800 tons in March.

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During the first four months of 1968, the number of foreign ship arrivals was the same as in the comparable period of 1967, but imports were 14 percent higher.

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Free World ships carried 29 percent of the total imports in the first four months of 1968 compared with only 13 percent during the same period in 1967.

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Aid Agreement with Hungary: North Vietnam and Hungary concluded a supplemental economic and military aid agreement for 1968 and aid agreements for 1969 on Tuesday. The supplemental agreement for this year, signed by North Vietnamese Deputy Premier Le Thanh Nghi, probably revises aid requirements listed in the original 1968 agreement signed last October. Nghi's trip to Eastern Europe has not received the publicity that previous aid-seeking trips have received, but he can probably be expected to visit other East European capitals and the USSR before returning to Hanoi. Nghi's current tour of Europe could point to a desire to adjust the composition of aid now that the bombing of a large part of North Vietnam has ceased, but may also reflect a need for greater quantities of aid than had been anticipated last fall.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

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